

Abstract

The invention relates to a personal computer system in a vehicle, a system for supporting a utility station relative to a base, a flexible support mechanism, a console for retractably supporting a utility station in an automobile, and a method for supporting an object. The flexible support mechanism includes a plurality of links connected together to form a chain of links, a plurality of connectors for connecting the links, and a locking mechanism for selectively locking the links together to rigidize the support mechanism. The systems include a flexible support mechanism and a utility station. The flexible support mechanism is connected to the utility station and a base. The base may be provided in a console or housing. A computer may be provided in the utility station. The system may also include a movable connection point where the support mechanism connects to the base. The method for supporting an object includes providing an object at the end of a flexible support mechanism, moving the object to a desired location by moving the flexible support mechanism, and rigidizing the flexible support mechanism such that the support mechanism becomes rigid to firmly position the object at the desired location. A break-away feature is provided where the support mechanism de-rigidizes in the event a vehicle is in an accident. A lock out feature is also provided to deter the driver from using the personal computer while the vehicle is moving. The invention also relates to a support mechanism for supporting objects, such as medical or dental devices, and is, thus, useful in industries such as the medical and dental fields, in addition to the automobile industry, among others.